



Senator Feinstein Protests Potentially Devastating Cuts  
in Forest Service Fire Prevention Funds for California  
December 17, 2004

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today protested a U.S. Forest Service proposal to take away \$9 million from California for preventing wildfires by shifting 15 percent of the hazardous fuels reduction funding for the State to other areas of the country.

In a letter to Agriculture Under Secretary Mark Rey, Senator Feinstein cited the devastating impact that redeploying hazardous fuels reduction funding for the Healthy Forests Restoration Act to other parts of the country would have on California such as:

- 90% less funding to implement community fire plans;
- 50% less funding to remove fuels from areas surrounding homes on Forest Service land (wildland-urban interface zones); and
- Treating 20,000 fewer acres in the Sierra Nevada forests.

Senator Feinstein wrote: **“With all due respect, I believe the proposed policy has its priorities backward. Precisely because there are so many homes near the forests in Southern and Central California, our treatment costs are higher and therefore we lose out under your plan. But far from being downgraded, treatments to protect human lives and private property should be your highest priority.**

**“As a lead co-sponsor of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, I did not intend the bill to be implemented in this manner.”**

The reduced funding would also harm efforts to curb wildfires in areas of Southern California such as Lake Arrowhead, Big Bear and the San Diego suburbs that are still recovering from last year’s catastrophic wildfires.

Attached is a copy of Senator Feinstein’s letter to Under Secretary Rey:

December 16, 2004

The Honorable Mark Rey  
Under Secretary for Natural Resources  
and Environment  
Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Under Secretary Rey:

I write to express my strong protest over the Forest Service's proposal to shift 15% of California's funding for hazardous fuel reduction to other parts of the country.

I understand that the Forest Service is proposing to take 15% of all hazardous fuel reduction funding and redeploy it to places where the treatment costs are lower. The high density of housing in the wildland-urban interface, among other factors, makes treatment costs in California higher – so we apparently will get none of the redeployed funding. As a result, regular Forest Service funding for hazardous fuel reduction in California will get cut from \$51.9 million to \$42.9 million.

The impacts of these funding cuts for hazardous fuel reduction in California will be devastating:

- Up to a 90% cut in funding for projects on state and private lands implementing community fire plans developed to fulfill the promise of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. If you virtually eliminate this funding, we could lose all of the communities' shared mission for improved forest health and fire protection that we have gained from the Act.
- Up to a 50% cut in funding for the removal of brush and other fuels in the wildland-urban interface on Forest Service land.
- A drop in acres treated in the Sierra Nevada forests from 50,000 to 30,000, outside of the northern California forests covered by the Quincy Library Group plan (the Lassen, the Plumas, and the Sierraville Ranger District of the Tahoe National Forest).

In evaluating the impacts of these major funding cuts, you need to keep in mind that this will harm Southern California communities like Lake Arrowhead, Big Bear, and the San Diego suburbs, which already suffered catastrophic wildfires just a year ago. The special \$30 million in Department of Defense Appropriations for Southern California fuel reduction efforts were intended to supplement, not replace, existing funding.

With all due respect, I believe the proposed policy has its priorities backward. Precisely because there are so many homes near the forests in Southern and Central California, our treatment costs are higher and therefore we lose out under your plan. But far from being downgraded, treatments to protect human lives and private property should be your highest priority.

As a lead co-sponsor of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, I did not intend the bill to be implemented in this manner. I urge you to reconsider this policy.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein  
U.S. Senator

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